THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) and (b) Official communications received so far from the US have not elaborated on a plan for a Missile Defence System. India's reaction related to President Bush's Statement of 1st May 2001, where he has outlined a new strategic framework comprising four elements, i.e., non-proliferation, counter proliferation, missile defence, and a reduction in US strategic nuclear forces. In Government's official statement of 2nd May 2001, it was stated, *inter alia,* that "India, particularly, welcomes the announcement of unilateral reductions by the US of nuclear forces, as an example. We also welcome moving away from the hair-trigger alerts associated with prevailing nuclear orthodoxies. India believes that there is a strategic and technological inevitability in stepping away from a world that is held hostage by the doctrine of MAD to a cooperative, defensive transition that is underpinned by further cuts and a de-alert of nuclear forces. We note with appreciation the US resolve to seek dialogue, consultation and cooperation with the countries concerned towards a fulfillment of this vision. India has always stood for a multilateral compact that results in an elimination of all nuclear weapons globally."

(c) and (d) Does not arise.

Police Verification for Issuing Passports

1278. SHRI K. RAMA MOHANA RAO: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) what steps Government are taking or proposed to take with the help of the State Governments to speed up the Police verification for issuing passports to the people;

(b) what steps Government have taken to simplify the process of issuing passports;

(c) whether there is any proposal before Government to reduce the number of days for issuing passports; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) Ministry officials have had detailed meetings with representatives of State Governments with a view to simplifying procedures and expediting police verification reports. Various measures that have already been introduced to expedite police verification include on-line transfer of police reports which has been introduced on an experimental basis at the Passport Offices in Mumbai, Chennai and Bangalore. Police authorities in the states have been instructed to establish a system where the police officials visiting the applicant's residence would leave a slip in case the applicant is absent, so that the applicant would be able to contact the police official to get the enquiry completed.

(b) The simplification of procedures for issue of passports is an on going process. Among the measures taken to expedite processing of passport applications are: computerisation of processing procedures, simplification of passport and miscellaneous services forms, introduction of Tatkaal Scheme for issue of out of turn passports and decentralisation of passport services to enable submission of completed passport application forms at the designated speed post centers and at the district level etc. The Government has recently constituted a committee to review the passport issue system aimed at simplifying the process of issue of passports.

(c) and (d) Passports are normally issued within five weeks, provided a clear police verification report has been received and the application is complete in all other respects. Ongoing comprehensive computerisation of passport offices and the planned on-line linkage with State/District police authorities is aimed at reduction in the number of days taken in the issue of passports.